

INTERNATIONAL CITY MANAGERS' ASSOCIATION  
1313 EAST 60TH STREET - CHICAGO 37, ILLINOIS

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### HANDLING OF CORRESPONDENCE, RECORDS, AND LIBRARY MATERIAL

We are considering a plan to set up a central filing and records department in the city hall to receive all letters, documents, literature, etc. How would such a plan work?

The three classes of material indicated in this question should be considered separately. First, is the correspondence and similar material which should be kept in letter-size files. Second, are the various types of records which are needed by the several departments in day-to-day administration and as a basis for reporting to the city manager. Third, are books, pamphlets, reports, periodicals, etc., which have no relation to the correspondence or records and which can be kept in a vertical file or on a library shelf.

Correspondence. Most municipal departments would hesitate to have all of their correspondence filed in a central office located some distance from the main departmental offices--that is, on a different floor and somewhat out of their control. Perhaps some ruling could be set up to the effect that the original copy of correspondence which is of interest to other departments would be kept in the office handling the inquiry, with carbon copies going to those departments and to a library. In this connection, a study made at the Tennessee Valley Authority, entitled Organization of File Service in a Large Agency, published by the Public Administration Service (1313 East 60 St., Chicago 37) contains valuable information. Further information is contained in a pamphlet issued by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (1 Madison Avenue, New York 10) entitled Correspondence Filing Systems and Practices available on request. A good book on filing is entitled, How to File and Index, by Bertha M. Weeks put out by the Ronald Press Company (15 East 26 Street, New York 10). The Ronald Press has also published a number of other books on this same subject.

Records. This includes daily work and inspection reports and numerous other records including reports to the department head and city manager. In the police, fire, public works, and certain other fields, complete record manuals have been published. Because such records are necessary in day-to-day administration they should be kept in the departmental offices. The city manager generally is concerned with the basic records systems because they supply the data used in monthly or more frequent reports which department heads make to the managers. Suggestive forms for use by department heads in reporting to the manager are contained in a special report entitled, Monthly Administrative Reports for Cities, published in 1943 by the International City Managers' Association. A central office could keep copies of monthly or other reports issued by the various city agencies, but this material is more properly referred to as library material. Another ICMA report, entitled Recording Council Action in the City Clerk's Office, contains some references to indexing and filing (page 71).

Library Material. Under this heading come various municipal reports as well as books, pamphlets, reports, and periodicals received from outside the city hall. Many cities are finding it desirable to set aside one or more rooms to serve as a reference library for use by city employees. Under this plan it might be advisable for the library to receive all periodicals and thus avoid duplication. The library could let all municipal department heads and employees know what periodicals are being received and route the journals to such people immediately upon

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receipt, requesting that when read they be returned to the library for filing and reference.

Central Control. Perhaps one of the best ways to reach a solution on the various problems is to set up an interdepartmental committee which would make a survey of city hall practices and methods on filing, indexing, preservation of records, disposal of records, and the handling of library material, on the basis of which the city manager could prepare uniform rules which would meet with the approval of department heads and would apply throughout the city hall. Sources of information the committee might use in making its survey would include: (1) City Hall Libraries as Administrative Aids, Public Management, March, 1935, pp.73-76. (2) The Preservation of Public Records, Municipal Finance Officers Association, 1313 East 60 Street, Chicago 37, July, 1944. 12pp. 35 cents. (3) A Modern Record System Designed and Used by the San Francisco Civil Service Commission. Remington Rand, Inc. 315 Fourth Avenue, New York. October, 1939. 14pp. (4) Public Administration Libraries; a Manual of Practice. Public Administration Service, 1313 East 60 Street, Chicago 37. 1941. 77pp. \$1.50. (5) Records Program; Records Administration and Archival Service. Tennessee Valley Authority, Knoxville. 1943. 54pp. (6) Records Retirement and Controls: A Checklist for Evaluation and Improvement. United States Bureau of the Budget, Washington 25, D. C. January, 1945. 5pp. (7) The Repair and Preservation of Records, United States National Archives, Washington, D. C. September, 1943. 56pp. (Note: Copies of any of the above reports may be secured on a 20-day loan from ICMA.)